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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission
374th meeting
Friday, 20 April 2018, 11.45 a.m.
New York

Chair: Ms. Bird ..... (Australia)

The meeting was called to order at 11.45 a.m.

Agenda item 6

Report of the Disarmament Commission to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session

The Chair: The United Nations Disarmament Commission will now proceed to adopt the reports of the subsidiary bodies under agenda items 4 and 5, as well as the draft report of the Commission, as contained in documents A/CN.10/2018/WG.1/CRP.4, A/CN.10/2018/WG.2/CRP.5 and A/CN.10/2018/L.1, which have been circulated. Thereafter, the Commission will hear concluding statements by delegations.

To start the process of considering and adopting the reports of the subsidiary bodies on individual agenda items, I shall first call on the Chairs of each Working Group to introduce their respective reports.

I now give the floor to the Chair of Working Group I on agenda item 4, entitled "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", Mrs. Diedre Nichole Mills, Deputy Permanent Representative of Jamaica, to introduce the report of Working Group I, as contained in document A/CN.10/2018/WG.1/CRP.4.

Mrs. Mills (Jamaica), Chair of Working Group I: It is my pleasure to introduce the report of Working Group I, as contained in document A/CN.10/2018/WG.1/CRP.4.

The Working Group held a total of 10 meetings over the duration of the 2018 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and had very fruitful and interactive exchanges among delegations. The Group concluded its deliberations yesterday with the adoption of its report as contained in the document I mentioned. As Chair, and under my own responsibility and without prejudice to the position of any delegation, I issued a paper, dated 12 April, to which is annexed a compilation of written proposals received from delegations on my paper. That compilation is without prejudice to the right of any State to put forward additional proposals in future. The Working Group agreed to continue its discussion of the Chair's paper at the next session of the Disarmament Commission. Documents were also presented to the Group by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the League of Arab States.

I would like to thank all delegations for the active, positive and constructive engagement, and to encourage that level of engagement in future sessions. I would also like to thank the Secretariat for its support.

With that, I have formally introduced the report of Working Group I on agenda item 4.

The Chair: There being no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group I on agenda item 4, as contained in document A/CN.10/2018/WG.1/CRP.4.

It was so decided.

The Chair: I warmly thank the Chair and all delegations that participated in Working Group I for their successful work

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The Commission will move on to the report of Working Group II on agenda item 5, entitled "In accordance with the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities (A/68/189), preparation of recommendations to promote the practical implementation of the transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space", as contained in document A/CN.10/2018/WG.2/CRP.5.

I now give the floor to the Chair of Working Group II, Ambassador Jeroen Cooreman, Deputy Permanent Representative of Belgium, to introduce the report of Working Group II.

Mr. Cooreman (Belgium), Chair of Working Group II: I have the honour this morning to introduce to the United Nations Disarmament Commission the report of Working Group II on agenda item 5, entitled "In accordance with the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities (A/68/189), preparation of recommendations to promote the practical implementation of the transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space". That report, which is before the Commission, is contained in document A/CN.10/2018/WG.2/CRP.5.

Working Group II held a total of 10 meetings between 3 and 18 April. During that period, after a general exchange of views, the Group focused its discussions on the following three topics — first, the implementation of measures contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts (see A/68/189); secondly, the relationship between outer space transparency and confidence-building measures and measures on long-term sustainability of outer space activities; and, thirdly, building understanding on transparency and confidence-building measures and other aspects related to maintaining international peace and security in outer space.

During the first six meetings, the Working Group exchanged views, both orally and in writing, and heard proposals and comments. On the basis of those exchanges, I prepared a paper under my sole responsibility for the consideration of Member States — first circulated on 13 April and subsequently discussed during three meetings on 16 and 18 April. During the tenth meeting, on 18 April, representatives agreed to continue discussions on the Chair's paper at the next session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. A Chair's summary of discussions was issued separately.

During the course of this session, Working Group II was also fortunate enough to hear from a number of speakers with directly relevant experience on the agenda item under consideration, including the Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities and the Chair of the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities, as well as the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament's subsidiary body on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. I thank them warmly for their contributions.

In conclusion, it is my pleasure to report that we have had a very fruitful session in the first year of our three-year cycle and have made a good beginning. All that remains for me to do is to thank all delegations, not only for their presence at our meetings but also for their constructive comments, which greatly facilitated the Group's work. I would also like to thank the Secretariat for its invaluable support.

The Chair: There being no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group II on agenda item 5, as contained in document A/CN.10/2018/WG.II/CRP.5.

It was so decided.

The Chair: I would like to warmly thank the Chair and all delegations that participated in Working Group II for their successful efforts.

Now that we have adopted the reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission, I would like to thank the Chairs of the two Working Groups for their tireless efforts and dedication. The Commission is deeply indebted to them for their able leadership in guiding the deliberations on very complex issues.

We will now begin our consideration of the draft report of the Disarmament Commission, as contained in document A/CN.10/2018/L.1.

I have the pleasure of giving the floor to the Rapporteur of the Commission, the very hard-working

Ms. Mills of Jamaica, to introduce the draft report of the Commission.

Ms. Mills (Jamaica): It is my honour, on behalf of the Bureau, to introduce to the Disarmament Commission the draft report of the Commission, as contained in document A/CN.10/2018/L.1. The draft report consists of four sections: "Introduction", "Organization and work of the substantive session of 2018", "Documentation" and "Conclusions and recommendations".

I would now like to address technical updates to the text of the draft report and draw delegations' attention to paragraphs 6, 14 and 15. In accordance with the technical updates, paragraph 6 should read as follows:

"During the 2018 session, the Bureau of the Commission was constituted as follows:

Chair:

Gillian Bird (Australia)

Vice-Chairs:

Representatives of Algeria, Bangladesh, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Nepal and Ukraine

Rapporteur:

Diedre Mills (Jamaica)"

Paragraph 14 should read as follows:

"In the course of the Commission's work, the documents listed below, dealing with substantive questions, were submitted and considered:

(a) Working paper submitted by the Non-Aligned Movement (A/CN.10/2018/WG.I/CRP.1);

(b) Working paper submitted by Australia (A/CN.10/2018/WG.II/CRP.1);

(c) Working paper submitted by the Russian Federation (A/CN.10/2018/WG.II/CRP.2).

(d) Working paper submitted by the States members of the League of Arab States (A/CN.10/2018/WG.II/CRP.3)

(e) Working paper submitted by the States members of the League of Arab States (A/CN.10/2018/WG.I/CRP.2)"

Paragraph 15 should read as follows:

"At its 373rd plenary meeting, on 20 April, the Disarmament Commission adopted ad referendum the reports of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. No recommendations were put forward by the Commission. The Commission agreed to submit the texts of the reports, which are reproduced below, to the General Assembly."

As is customary, the final report is a factual description of the Commission's work and proceedings during the session. The substantive part comprises two reports of the Working Groups, which were just adopted by the Commission and are part of the present report.

This year, the first year of a new cycle, the Commission worked under the agenda adopted at the organizational meeting on 22 February 2018 (see A/CN.10/PV.368). In keeping with the Commission's deliberative mandate, oral and written proposals were submitted by delegations, which contributed to the objectives of the groups.

I was privileged to observe the tireless efforts of the Chairs of the two Working Groups and of delegations to address pertinent issues on the substantive agenda items, as well as to engage in in-depth discussions with a view to finding common ground. I want to take this opportunity to say that it has been a great honour to serve as Rapporteur during this session, and in particular to work under the able leadership of our Chair, Ambassador Gillian Bird.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for the counsel and support that her Office has provided to the Bureau and Member States, and to Ms. Catherine Pollard, Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, for the excellent organization and servicing of the Commission's meetings. Last but not least, I would like to express my appreciation to all the interpreters, who supported our work by making it possible for us to understand each other, and to commend all members of the Secretariat for their tireless efforts and kind assistance.

With those brief remarks, I recommend that the Commission adopt the draft report, as contained in document A/CN.10/2018/L.1.

The Chair: We shall now consider the draft report of the Commission, as orally amended by the Rapporteur. We will examine it section by section.

If there are no comments on section I, "Introduction", I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt it.

It was so decided.

The Chair: We turn next to section II, "Organization and work of the 2018 substantive session", paragraphs 2 to 12. Does any delegation wish to make a comment on this section?

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would first like to thank you, Madam Chair, as well as the Chairs of Working Groups I and II for your efforts, as well as the Secretariat for its substantive, administrative and technical support.

I have one proposal, under paragraph 3, which traditionally relates to the adoption of the draft agenda. In this first year of the new cycle of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, we propose that a sentence be added following the first sentence, namely:

> "The Commission also decided that the agenda for its substantive session of 2018 should serve for the period 2018-2020."

The Chair: I should indicate that we have asked the Secretariat to check on that formulation. It is indeed the same as what was used in the first session of the previous three-year cycle.

There being no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt section II, paragraphs 2 to 12, as orally revised by the Rapporteur and including the oral revision proposed by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

It was so decided.

The Chair: We shall now take up section III, entitled "Documentation", paragraphs 13 and 14.

There being no comments or questions, I shall take it that the Commission decides to adopt section III, paragraphs 13 and 14, as orally revised by the Rapporteur.

It was so decided.

The Chair: There being no comments on section IV, entitled "Conclusions and recommendations", paragraphs 15 to 18, I shall take it that the Commission decides to adopt section IV, paragraphs 15 to 18, as orally revised by the Rapporteur.

It was so decided.

The Chair: Having adopted all sections of the draft, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the draft report of the Commission contained in document A/CN.10/2018/L.1, as a whole.

It was so decided.

Concluding statements

The Chair: Having adopted the report of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC), I would like to offer a few thoughts of my own.

It has been an incredible honour to chair this year's session of the Disarmament Commission, particularly so as it was the first time Australia has chaired the Commission. Looking back, we were nominated for this role despite the lack of an agenda, Bureau or Working Group Chairs. What we did have was a strong sense of optimism and the determination to strengthen the role of the Commission as a central part of the United Nations disarmament machinery. With the cooperation of all delegations, the agenda was adopted, two outstanding Working Group Chairs and a Bureau were elected, and we demonstrated the Commission's potential by getting this new cycle off to a good start.

The topics we have addressed were not easy ones, and so progress was by no means assured when we set out. But, in the course of the session, we engaged in the kind of exchanges that are now the trademark of the UNDC — off-script at times and with many metaphors, but always meaningful and with the aim of building awareness and taking our important mandate forward.

Just to add to my earlier remarks, I think members will all agree that this first session in the new cycle could not have been better served than by our two tireless Working Group Chairs — Ambassador Mills of Jamaica, who also doubled as Rapporteur, and Ambassador Cooreman of Belgium. It was no small commitment given their busy schedules, and I commend them again on the excellent steering of their respective Working Groups. I would also like to thank all the Vice-Chairs — Algeria, Bangladesh, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Jamaica, Nepal and Ukraine. They all helped to ensure the smooth running of this session. Finally, I would like to thank my own excellent delegation, whose hard work I have been very grateful for.

Similarly, we have again been extremely well served by the Secretariat, including all those who work behind the scenes — the Department for General

Assembly and Conference Management, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, Conference Room officers and sound engineers, as well as our interpreters, who, for example, have had to deal with lots of technical space-related terminology this year, including the acronym "CCND" in the Working Group on nuclear disarmament. As I mentioned at the meeting of the Committee of the Whole last week, I feel that solid foundations have now been built and that delegations have met our collective responsibilities. Let us build on that for the remainder of the cycle and aim for consensus outcomes for both Working Groups in 2020. Our progress this year has made that an entirely achievable ambition.

I know several representatives will be travelling to Geneva later today and over the weekend for the session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I wish them well for that important meeting and ask that they keep in mind the unique opportunity that the UNDC has to make a contribution to that Review Conference, as well as to the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Likewise, important discussions related to the long-term sustainability of outer space are coming up in Vienna. We will watch developments there with interest, given the work we have commenced this year in the Commission.

The Commission will now hear delegations' concluding statements.

Mr. Sun Lei (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Madam Chair, and the two Working Group Chairs. With the concerted effort of all representatives, the first session of this new cycle of the United Nations Disarmament Commission has concluded smoothly and taken up its agenda items, thereby laying a good foundation for next year's session.

Our meeting this year was convened against a background of a very complex international security situation. At present, international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation do not give cause for much optimism. The question of the peaceful use of outer space is also encountering new challenges. In the course of this session, all parties exchanged views on the issues in a broad, in-depth and frank manner. Although we were unable to arrive at a consensus document, this type of discussion and exchange is constructive in and of itself, reflecting the importance that the parties attach to the issues as well as the confidence of all in the importance of maintaining the status and role of the Disarmament Commission.

The Chinese delegation participated actively in the work of this session and held numerous discussions and consultations with all colleagues. We thank the two Working Group Chairs for their efforts in preparing their respective reports (A/CN.10/2018/WG.1/CRP.4 and A/CN.10/2018/WG.2/CRP.5). At the same time, we think it appropriate that the procedural report A/CN/10/20189/L.1) include wording indicating that the two documents still need further discussion. This session also revealed that there are still divergences of position on some major issues, and I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate some of China's major positions.

With regard to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, China consistently advocates for the complete prohibition and destruction of nuclear weapons, as well as nuclear non-proliferation. At the same time, we believe that the unconditional commitment not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear countries and nuclear-weapon-free zones is a most important issue and should be a top priority.

With regard to outer space, we believe that the peaceful use of outer space is in the common interests of humankind. The commitment of all countries to not deploying weapons in outer space and to preventing an arms race there is a crucial transparency and confidence-building measure where the prevention of an arms race in outer space is concerned. China will continue to take part in the discussions to advance the transparency and confidence-building measures aimed at preventing an arms race in outer space.

The world today is experiencing major changes and facing serious challenges. In order to address global security challenges, all countries must cooperate in mobilizing the international community with a view to ensuring international security, arms control and disarmament. No country can single-handedly respond to those challenges, just as no country can prosper in isolation. The need for international cooperation, particularly among the major Powers, has never been greater. China would like to work with all parties to continue to maintain the authority of existing multilateral disarmament mechanisms, including the

Disarmament Commission, and to promote the leading role of the United Nations and the achievement of effective outcomes in its follow-up reviews.

Lastly, I want to once again express my sincere appreciation to the Working Group Chairs and all delegations. The Secretariat, including the interpreters and technicians, has done a great deal to ensure the smooth conduct of our meetings, and we are grateful for that. We would also like to thank the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for its efforts. I wish every success to our colleagues going to the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Mr. Luque Márquez (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Madam Chair, and both Chairs of the Working Groups for their excellent work throughout this session. I think it is a good start. We now have two documents (A/CN.10/2018/WG.1/CRP.4 and A/CN.10/2018/WG.2/CRP.5) that are full of ideas and proposals. Regardless of the level of agreement that we have on them at the moment, that will enable us to continue discussions next year — for there are things that need to be discussed. The best time for the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the Working Groups and, indeed, other disarmament forums as well is when representatives are able to speak clearly and transparently about our national interests, ideas and proposals, and above all, when we remember our shared objective of disarmament, even when we have differences.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my particular appreciation for all the colleagues with whom I have had the honour and pleasure of working with over the past five years in the Disarmament Commission, the First Committee and other forums. It has been the peak of my professional and personal life. Disarmament, and the need for it itself, is a calling that I think we all share. We cannot and must not forget its importance to the United Nations.

Philip Noel-Baker, in his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1959, said:

(*spoke in English*)

> "Disarmament is not a policy by itself; it is part of the general policy of the UN. But it is a vital part of that policy; without it, the UN institutions can never function as they should."

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I think that truth has been forgotten to a certain extent in our Organization, but we, the members of the disarmament community — and I think we can proudly describe ourselves as such — must remind the world of the importance of disarmament, which, as the Secretary-General says, not only saves lives but beyond that must also save humankind.

The Chair: There being no further statements, let me again thank all delegations for their constructive contributions to the 2018 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

Agenda item 7

Other business

The Chair: There being no requests for the floor under the last item on the agenda of the 2018 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, I should like to wish representatives safe travels, especially to those departing New York for the upcoming session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. To those who are staying, I wish them a very good day.

Closure of the session

The Chair: I declare closed the 2018 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.